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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
13 June 1953

WORLD REACTION TO THE EAST GERMAN
POLITBURO DECISIONS

(Report No. 2)

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USSR

No comment to date.

Eastern Europe

Satellite media have not as yet referred to the new East Germany policy decisions.

East Germany

The official Soviet paper in Germany, Taegliche Rundschau, commenting on Germany party and government admission of previous mistakes, says "the former Soviet Control Commission is also, to an extent, responsible for the mistakes that have been made." The paper contrasts the improved conditions to be expected in East Germany, with the "concentration camps" and "forced labor," which is the lot of the refugees who fled to West Germany seeking the "promised paradise." The paper concludes that the new policy reflects the government's wish and determination to advance toward the "peaceful reunification" of an economically strong Germany.

An East Berlin paper - the National Zeitung - also calls for a peace treaty for a united Germany, and stresses the importance of popular vigilance to achieve this aim. The Communist Berlin radio reports that the new policy has been "joyously received" throughout Berlin and discussed with confidence and trust in the government in East German factories.

West Germany

The West German press is generally very skeptical about the announced reversal of East German policies. Typical editorial comments are as follows:

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"Moscow only wants to prevent West German integration. Let us hope these moves do not catch our statesmen by surprise. The important thing is that no compromise should be reached in Germany like the one in Korea.... The Reds are merely executing a tactical maneuver; their aims have not changed.... While Moscow's new policy is dangerous, it gives the West an opportunity to counter with even shrewder moves to force the Kremlin to replace its phony concessions with genuine ones... The changes came too suddenly to represent a true change of heart. The West must continue its policy of strength.... The same men still rule the USSR; they may again do an about-face and conduct an even greater terror policy.... There are no indications of a fundamental change in Pankow's course, but only a retraction of recent measures.... Let us await the developments of the coming weeks."

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West Berlin papers are as skeptical, although Tagesspiegel fears that the West may already have been led into the "peace offensive" trap. "What will it do," it asks, "if the Soviets suggest a revival of the Allied Control Council?" It feels that the demoralizing effect of the "peace offensive" has already progressed to the point where "the question arises whether the West deserves its freedom at all."

Other papers point out that the daily stream of refugees will be a valid barometer of whether East German promises will be followed by deeds. One declares that "Ulbricht has to fall before one can trust change."

Austria

All Vienna papers of 12 June gave top play to reported "reforms" in East Germany -- ostensibly designed to promote German reunification. Comment, however, is restrained, with non-Communist observers attributing these measures to Soviet desire to influence the Bermuda conference and the West German elections. Most Vienna papers note Adenauer's determined rejection of any return to a "Potsdam policy."

Reaction is understandably more concerned with the easing of Soviet occupation controls in Austria itself. Chancellor Raab

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and Foreign Minister Gruber have advised American officials that they regard the changes as in general more apparent than real. They are, however, gratified by the recognition of full sovereignty implied in the granting of ambassadorial rank to the Soviet High Commissioner and by the relaxation of requirements for transit permits on goods crossing the demarcation line from the Soviet to the Western zones.

No official comment has been reported from the strongly anti-Communist Socialist leadership on these developments in Austria. However, the highly respected editor of the principal Socialist newspaper in Vienna questions whether the abolition of a shameful state of affairs is reason for exuberant gratitude. He concludes that only by signing an Austrian state treaty can the Russians really prove their friendliness toward Austria.

France

The French press considers the latest developments in East Germany of the greatest importance and is generally agreed that the Soviet moves are designed primarily to undermine Adenauer's position in the forthcoming West German elections and to paralyze efforts to integrate Germany into the Western defense system.

Rightist Aurore editorializes: "It is undoubtedly fear which dictates Moscow's peaceful acts, but this is no reason for refusing talks with the Kremlin."

The economic and financial daily, Les Echos, regards these concessions as of much greater scope than the first gestures after Stalin's death -- a real change in policy.

The non-Communist leftist Franc-Tireur believes that the USSR really needs a detente: that tension is threatening the Soviet position in the Satellite countries.

Moderate Depeche du Midi believes it possible that the leaders in Moscow have finally realized that their continuous threats have led only to a strengthening of the common front of the democratic nations and to their determination to resist.

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